



A LIKE THE FLOWERS, B LIKE THE OCEAN

Jade's Synesthesia Story

By Sarah Godlin

Illustrated By Kylee Conriquez



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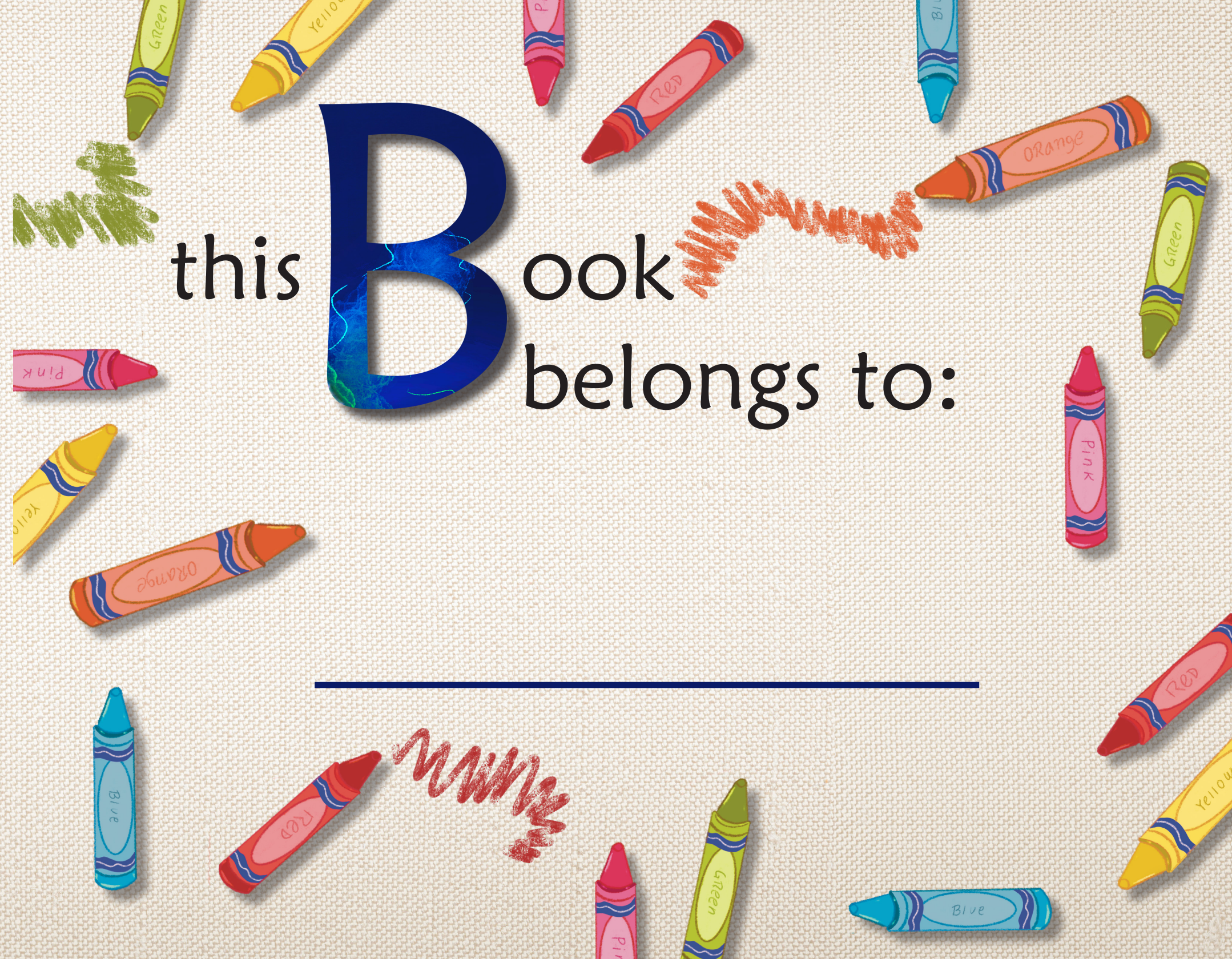
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this **B**ook belongs to:



Jade loved her new kindergarten
class. She was making new
friends and playing new games.
It was a lot of fun!





Until Jade thought that
Teacher made a mistake.

“In your first few weeks of kindergarten,
we will really get to know all of the
letters of the alphabet!” said Teacher,
pointing to a large yellow A on the
board.

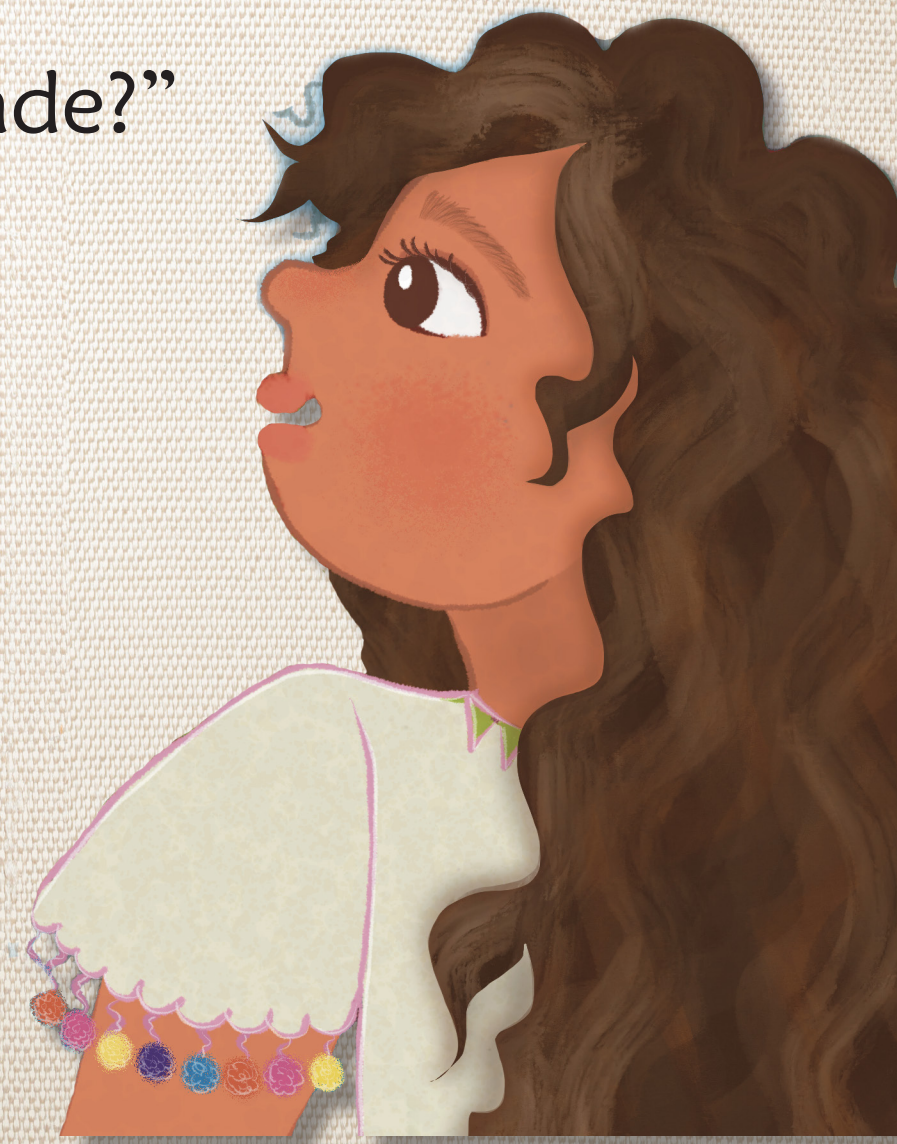




“That A is wrong,”
said Jade.

“How is it wrong, Jade?”
asked Teacher.

“It’s colored yellow,”
said Jade.



“A s are a dark red, like
the flowers that grow
outside of our house.”

A



“A s can be all sorts
of colors! Any color
you can think of!” said
Teacher.



“No way!
Big A s are dark
pink-red...
They are the
same color
as 6.”

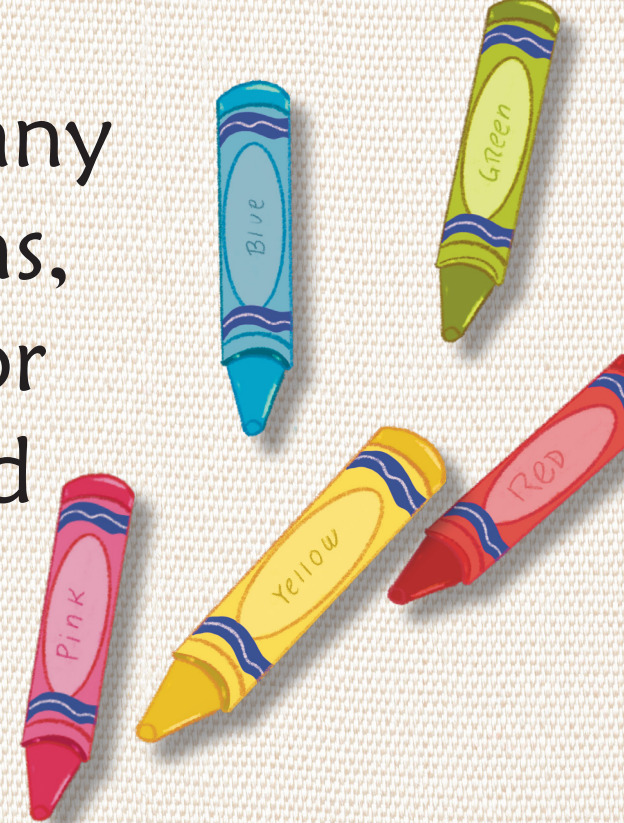
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4



“Little a s are pinker,
like the dragon fruit we
get on special occasions.
The same pink as 4,” said
Jade.

“Letters and numbers can be any
color from the box of crayons,
and you are allowed to color
yours whichever color you’d
like,” said Teacher.



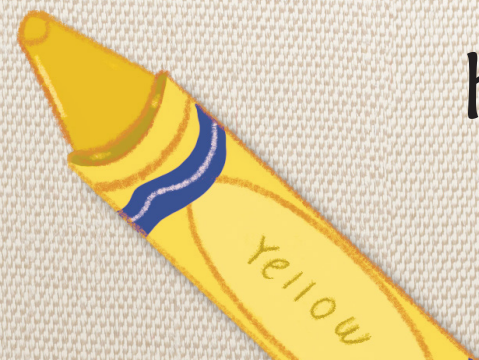
“Please color your capital A,
and circle all the things on
your paper that start with
the letter A,” Teacher said to
the students.



Jade thought of her classmates coloring A s all the colors of the rainbow and became very upset.

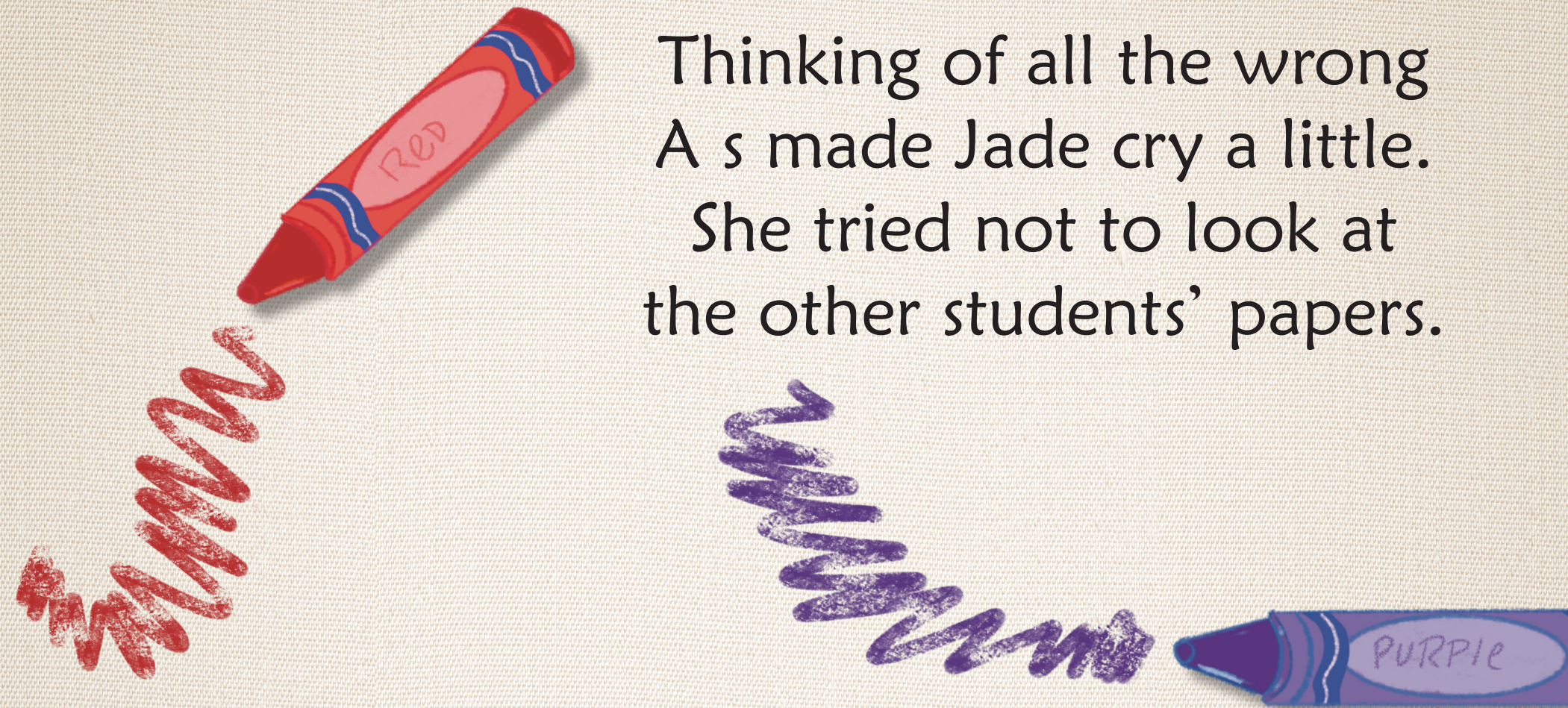


“How can Teacher be so wrong!?” Jade thought. “Teachers are supposed to have all the right answers.”





Thinking of all the wrong
A s made Jade cry a little.
She tried not to look at
the other students' papers.



Teacher saw Jade's big emotions,
so during quiet time she asked
Jade why she was so upset
during letters.



“Everyone is very wrong about A, and this is only the first letter! Will tomorrow be B? Will it be like the ocean? Like the dark blue deep down where the big squid live?”





“Or will
you teach it
the
wrong color?”
asked Jade.

Teacher didn't know the answer to
this, but she hugged Jade anyway,
and hoped tomorrow would be an
easier letters lesson for her.



Later that day, Jade
approached Teacher holding
her nametag.



“Can you change
this to the right colors?”
Jade asked.



Teacher looked at the nametag. It
said “Jade Cohen” in pink letters. Teacher
had written it herself.



“What is the right color, Jade?” asked
Teacher. “Is it green like a jade stone?”

Jade couldn't believe a teacher
wouldn't know the answer to this!

“Gray and turquoise, like my
grandpa's suit and my grandma's
jewelry, please.”

“And yellow
for my last
name.”

“Not like the
sun, but like a
banana slug.”

How did teacher not know this?
thought Jade.





“I think I can make a new nametag for you. You don’t like pink?” asked Teacher.

“Pink is my favorite color, but it’s not my name color. I wish I had a pink name,” said Jade.

“You do! It’s right here!”
Teacher pointed to the nametag.



Teacher thought she might learn more about why Jade was upset if she spoke with Jade’s parents.

Jade wasn’t sure how to say what she wanted to say, so tears came out instead of words.





Jade's parents didn't know why her nametag's color made Jade cry. They didn't know why Jade got very upset during letters time, or again during numbers time.

Jade's parents thought it may be important to find someone who DID know, so they asked Jade to chat with Dr. Mallory, who knew lots of stuff about why children do what they do.

Dr. Mallory was nice, and she had a fun office. She asked lots of questions, and held up lots of cards.



She let Jade play with toys and books while she spoke with Jade's parents.



“There is absolutely nothing to worry about,” said Dr. Mallory.

Jade’s parents were happy to hear this.

“Jade has Synesthesia! It’s not scary, and it won’t hurt her.”

Jade’s parents were happy to hear this, too, but they were still confused.



“Synesthesia means perceiving together. Jade’s neural sensory pathways are very close together.”



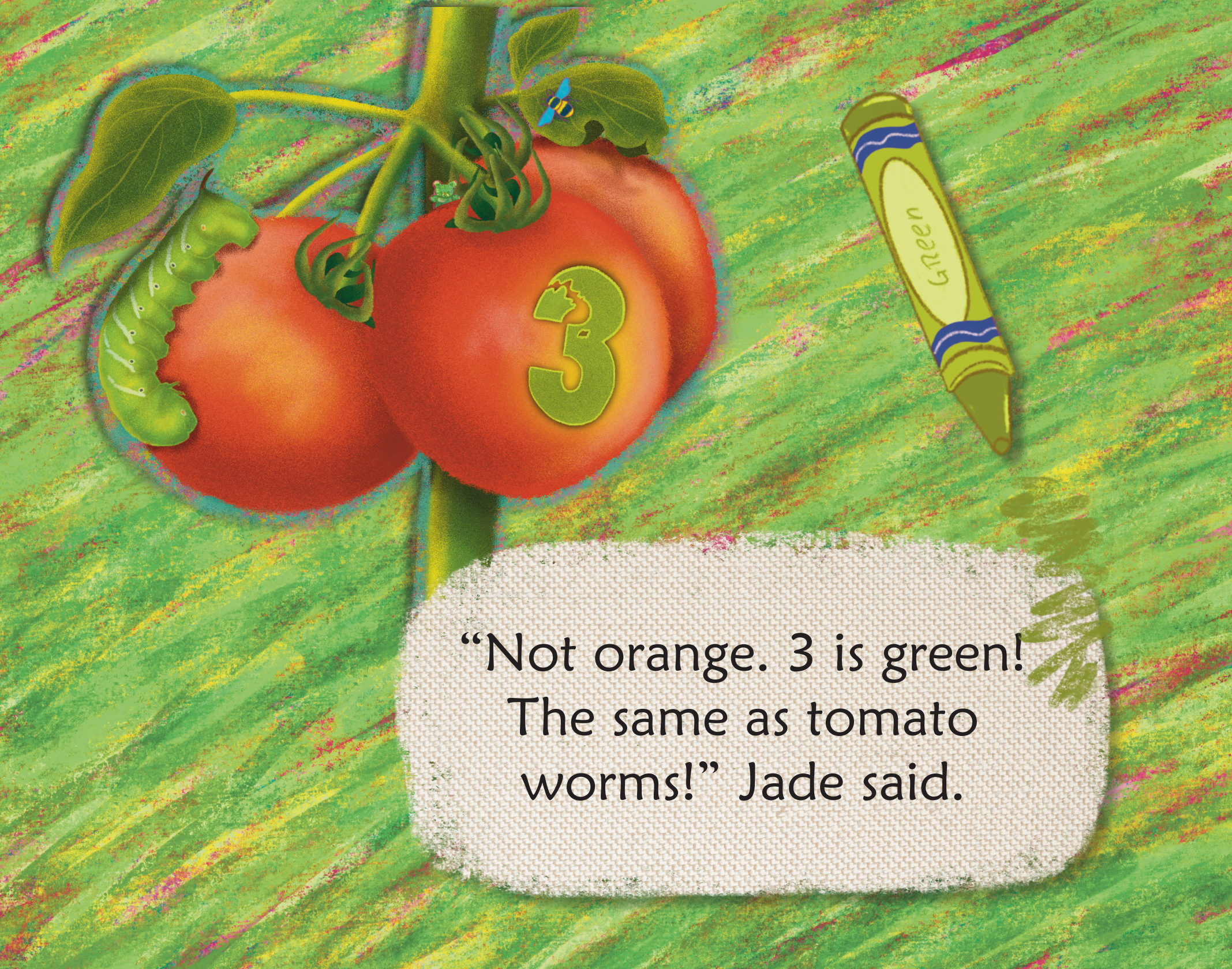
Jade's Mom asked Dr. Mallory to explain a little more.



“In our brains, the spot that knows colors is very close to the spot that knows letters and numbers,” said Dr. Mallory. “In some brains the thought paths cross each other in that area!”



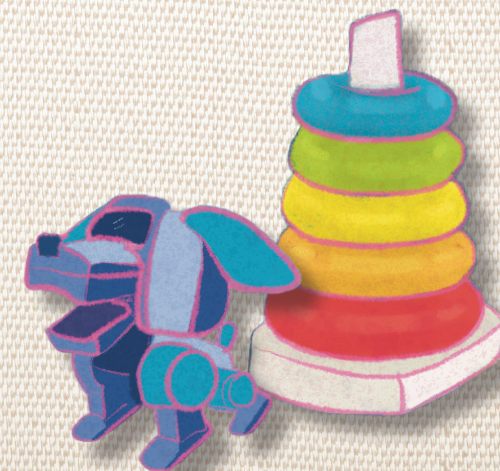
“For example, when she sees a 3, Jade thinks of the color orange. She perceives 3 and orange together.”



“Not orange. 3 is green!
The same as tomato
worms!” Jade said.

“Numbers, dates, words, letters,
even times and months are closely
related to colors in Jade’s brain. It’s
a gift that some people have. For
others, the sense can be touch, or
sound, or smell, or taste. It’s all part
of being a synesthete.”

“I’m a sin-uh-steet!” said Jade
from the toy corner.



“Lots of famous artists and creative people had or have synesthesia,” said Dr. Mallory.



“It helped them make music and art, and to think up great ideas!”



Duke Ellington



Nikola Tesla



Tori Amos



Frank Ocean



Itzhak Perlman




“So why has she been upset at school?” asked Jade’s dad.

“It’s hard when the world doesn’t see what you see,” said Dr. Mallory.




“She will grow the language to express herself, and it will get easier for her over time. But first, there is something important Jade needs to know about the world.”





“Jade, did you know
that no one else
knows what colors
all of the numbers
and letters are?”

“That is special to you! They
are your colors. People don’t see
them, so they just go ahead and
make things any old color.
So if they mess up a
color, this is why!”





M

Jade was so surprised! The other students didn't know that M was orangey, or that 10 was black and white.

And Teacher didn't either. That's why she was coloring words and numbers differently. Teacher was trying to give letters and numbers a color to the kids who didn't already have one.

That was nice of her.

10

And Teacher, who spoke with Jade's parents, let Jade choose her name color, and asked Jade if she could ignore how silly the wrong letters and numbers sometimes were.

Jade said she could.





Teacher also asked if it was
OK to let the other students
know that Jade saw numbers
and letters as colors.



She said yes to this as well, because she
was proud of her special gift.





“What color is my name?” asked Addy.

“What about me?” asked Greyland.



“Addy is dark pink and dark yellow,” said Jade.

“Greyland is green and white,” said Jade.



“Wow. I thought it would be gray!” said Greyland.

“And what about me?”
Teacher asked Jade.
“What color is my name?”

“Teacher? That’s easy.
Black and yellow. Like a
bee!”

“But not like a B,
because those are dark
blue, like the ocean.”





Jade Cohen

THE END 



SYNESTHESIA FACTS

Though many people experiencing synesthesia find it pleasant, the process is involuntary. The area where the brain recognizes color is very close to the area of the brain that recognizes letters and numbers.

Sometimes synesthesia can be present in children and fade as they go through puberty.

Occasionally a color representation of a letter or number will shift over a lifetime.

Many children in the past who expressed their synesthesia outwardly were ridiculed or labeled “attention seeking,” so they learned to keep it to themselves.

Synesthesia may be the first perceptual condition where a gene is responsible. (Cytowic, Eagleman)



Some people have multiple combinations of synesthesia. These folks are called “polymodal.”

Synesthesia can help someone remember, but also make things easier to forget. For example, the more colorful a phone number is, the harder it is to remember. If a phone number is similar colors or only two colors, it is easier to remember for some synesthetes.

Synesthesia is usually unidirectional. This means that while 2 is associated with the color yellow, the color yellow does not hold the association with the number 2.

Scientific findings have linked synesthesia and poor sense of direction, as well as difficulties with math, due to differences in the parietal region of the brain. (Cytowic) This is not always the case.

Synesthesia is oftentimes genetically handed down.





TYPES OF SYNESTHESIA

There are many combinations of senses that can be expressed as synesthesia. Here are some:

Number > Forms

When a person hears a particular number, a shape develops in their mind.

Taste > Shape

The sensation of a shape develops in the mind of a shape-taste synesthete when they taste a food.

Sound > Taste

A taste becomes associated with a certain sound or word. For example, upon hearing the word "bell," the taste of toast may appear in a sound-taste synesthete.



Hearing > Color

Different sounds create the sensations of different colors.

Grapheme > Color

Letters are represented as colors in the mind of this type of synesthete.

Color > Emotion

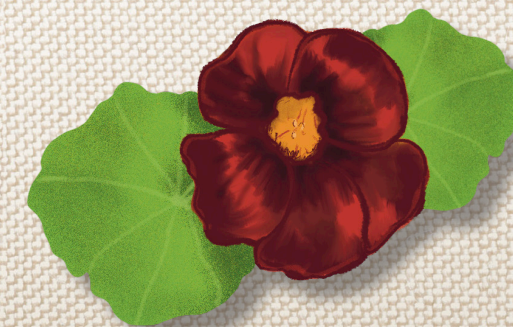
An emotion is assigned to each color. Purple is brooding, for example.

Color > Personality

A person associates personalities to colors. Green is energetic, for example.

Vision > Temperature

When a person with this type of synesthesia sees something, it is associated with a temperature, like hot or cold.





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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sarah Godlin has had synesthesia for as long as she can remember, but has only had a name for her experience since 2000, when she found a group of people on the internet who also see numbers and letters as colors.

In other writings on the subject, she explains how synesthesia can be a gift as well as a burden, since relying on colors for number and date memory recall can be faulty. Colors can be very similar, yet stand for different concepts.

Sarah is a writer and the Archivist and Digital Publisher for Cal Poly Humboldt University. She lives in Humboldt County with her wife Kelly, and her children Ruth and Dinah. She has a bachelors degree in English from Cal Poly Humboldt, and a Masters degree in publishing from George Washington University.

In her color scheme, her first name is white with bits of pink, and her last name is a dark green.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kylee Conriquez is an illustrator and mixed media artist who studied studio art with a concentration in painting and illustration at Humboldt State University. She is from Fresno, California where she worked as a wildlife technician, helping conserve the habitat of sensitive species. It was there where she fostered a love for creating whimsical illustrations that draw inspiration from nature.

Through her work, Kylee hopes to engage the younger generation with their natural surroundings, and inspire their innate ability to play while they create. To learn more about Kylee, visit her at KyleeConriquezart.com.

In Sarah's color scheme, Kylee's first name is tan and grass green, and her last is bright yellow with a tiny bit of black at the end.



“A perceptual world unsuspected by any adult, more vivid and meaningful to a synesthetic child than mere imagination.”

-Dr Richard Cytowic, Leading synesthesia researcher

Jade has a special way of seeing the world.....

She just doesn't know it yet. It is going to take a teacher's curiosity to help Jade understand why she sees letters as colors in her brain.

Jade has synesthesia. Colors play a huge part in the way she thinks! By working together, Jade, her parents, her teacher, and her classmates can all see the world through each other's eyes.

This book also contains information and research for parents of children who exhibit synesthesia.



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